

the Wall Street Journal article, as well as of the specific questions that McCain had presented to Babbitt in his letter. Indeed, McCain understood Babbitt's statements concerning Eckstein in the last paragraph of the first page of Babbitt's letter to be a rejection of the assertions Eckstein had made in his affidavit.

McCain believed Babbitt must have been upset by McCain's initial letter. As Babbitt wrote in his Aug. 30 letter to McCain: "I regret that, relying solely on a newspaper article, you have chosen to so publicly call into question the integrity of our decisionmaking on this matter." As a result, on Sept. 19, 1996, McCain wrote a reply to Babbitt in which McCain conveyed to Babbitt that he had only been pursuing facts and had not intended to impugn Babbitt's integrity:

Bruce, the purpose of my inquiry was not at all to give any life at all to accusations about your character or integrity but simply to get at the facts. In particular, the allegations had more to do with the purported actions of the DNC and the White House than with you and the Department. I appreciate very much the factual and candid nature of your response.

In that letter, however, McCain again underscored the seriousness with which he viewed the allegations, and the need to conduct an inquiry into those allegations.<sup>622</sup> McCain stated in his Sept. 19 letter that he had intended in his July 19 letter to Babbitt "to seek additional information on some highly inflammatory allegations published in a major national news medium." McCain added: "I am sure you would agree that, once published, allegations like those should be the subject of some inquiry."<sup>623</sup>

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<sup>622</sup>As McCain testified about his Sept. 19 letter: "I wanted to assure Secretary Babbitt that, one, I thought they were serious allegations, but I was in no way trying to impugn his character or his – character or integrity." Grand Jury Testimony of John McCain, March 17, 1999, at 52 (hereinafter "McCain G.J. Test.").

<sup>623</sup>McCain also wrote: "That is why I sought out your views on these troubling  
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